The 2019 World Arabian Horse Organization WAHO Conference was held in Australia in the picturesque seaside resort of Terrigal, New South Wales at the Crowne Plaza Terrigal Pacific Hotel from February 6—8. Graciously hosted by the Arabian Horse Society of Australia (AHSA Ltd), there were 25 countries represented.

Many guests had spent the previous few days enjoying Pre-Conference Tours and the Arabian Ambassadors and Ormics, hosted at the East Coast Championships by the New South Wales Arabian Horse Association. As the crowd gathered in Terrigal, Tuesday evening saw us all greeting old friends and meeting new ones at the poolside reception at the Crowne Plaza Terrigal Pacific Hotel. We were entertained by Bush Poet Carolie Gordon, who gave a warm welcome and said how Australia is incredibly proud to host the WAHO Conference for the third time.

The General Assembly sessions took place on Wednesday and Friday. The Conference was opened by the AHSA Ltd Chairman Leonie Williamson, who gave a warm welcome and said how Australia was incredibly proud to host the WAHO Conference for the third time. The General Meeting was formally convened by WAHO President Peter Pond, who thanked everyone for making the journey to attend. He introduced the Executive Committee members and clarified that they do not represent their own country or region, they put aside their national interests to represent the interests of the Arabian horse worldwide.

Referencing the history of WAHO, more information on which can be found at the WAHO website, www.waho.org, Peter also gave us a delightful quote from Coralie Gordon, one of Australia’s eminent Arab horse historians who was the author of the Australian section in the book, which is available from the AHSA Ltd office.

The next agenda item covered a number of points relating to WAHO’s standing on matters of interest to the Arabian horse worldwide. Mountains of paper were covered at the WAHO website, www.waho.org. The next agenda item covered a number of points relating to WAHO’s Member countries. Peter explained it was with great regret the Executive Committee had agreed to accept the withdrawal of Belize from WAHO Membership. Since joining WAHO in 1978, Belize has always been one of the smaller registries and they have seen a drop in the number of Arabian breeders, to the extent that maintaining WAHO membership is no longer sustainable. It’s hoped a neighbouring registry will act in a caretaker capacity to register any future foals born in Belize.

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Ron Males (Ralvon Arab Stud). Marion Richmond (Simeon Stud) with exhibited their artwork. H.R.H Princess Alia Al Hussein Al Saleh elected AHSA Ltd Chairman, At Simeon, Allan Preston with newly their gift hats. Br. Peter McIntosh (Aus) with Jehangir and Navaz Rustomjee (Bahrain) sporting. Considerable efforts their progeny, with several enthusiastic approximately 60 imported Arabians and Albania, where there are known to be one in particular at the moment is. The always interesting reports from the Voting Delegates about the Arabian horse affairs in their countries took up the rest of the day. As the Syrian delegate was unable to be present due to visa issues, his report was read out by the Executive Secretary, and it was heartening to note that their Arabian breeding and activities are slowly recovering. A detailed sheet giving information about all WAHO Member countries was also distributed. The most popular activities are showing, racing and endurance. Several countries, mainly in the Middle East, have seen considerable growth in the number of foals registered each year, others elsewhere in the world have seen numbers fall steady, or decline due to a variety of reasons. Obviously not all the statistic from 2018 were yet available, but for the figures provided for 2017, countries registering more than 1,000 foals annually were USA: 3,153 foals; Saudi Arabia 3,008; Turkey 1,800; Egypt 1,700; France 1,486; Kuwait 1,340; United Arab Emirates 1,081. The day concluded with another get-together over a delightful ‘street food’ buffet celebrating international cuisine. Thursday was for many the most highly anticipated day of the Conference, as two of Australia’s iconic Arabian horse breeders generously threw open their doors to all the Conference guests. Visits to Simeon Stud and Mulawa Arabian Stud are always sensational, educational and memorable. After an early breakfast everyone boarded the coach to travel to Simeon Stud at Dural. Upon arrival we meandered foals. Sometimes other existing WAHO Member countries are asked to be their “caretaker registry” and register those horses according to all WAHO registration rules, so these foals are not lost to the breed. For example, Australia is authorised to register the Arabians in Brunei, Ind, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. WAHO is always keen to encourage any country which is experiencing a growth of interest in Arabian horses. One in particular at the moment is Albania, where there are known to be approximately 60 imported Arabians and their progeny, with several enthusiastic owners and breeders. Considerable efforts have been made both by WAHO and the Italian Registry, ANICA, either to assist Albania to set up a Registry and start their own stud book, or alternatively to arrange for Italy to register horses on their behalf. A motion was carried that ANICA can act as the caretaker registry for the Arabian horses of Albania until such time as Albania has its own Stud Book individually approved by WAHO. Other countries with a growing interest in Arabian horses include Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of North Macadonia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, WAHO is aware of six breeders owning between them around 30 imported Arabs as well as a few foals being born in the country. Montenegro’s
The Arabian Stud was established around 1956 by Ruth and Peter Simon with their daughter Marion. Today Greg, Julie and Jane Farrell remain committed to the desert ideal of the Arabian breed. Stewards are dedicated to the welfare of horses and foals grazing peacefully in rolling green paddocks. The world-renowned Simeon Arabian Stud, a short distance away at Berrilee, was established around five decades ago by the Farrell family. As we walked down the laneway to the impressive stables, we observed beautiful horses popping their heads out of the windows to greet us. One of Australia’s leading Arabian horse farms, Mulawa Arabian Stud was established around five decades ago by the Farrell family. Today Greg, Julie and Jane Farrell remain committed to the desert ideal of the elegant athlete, creating Arabian horses that possess the ultimate combination of both beauty and utility. Scott Benjamin did a sterling job as presenter during our visit. There were 14 impressive Arabians paraded and the mare families represented were Mulawa Chance (Ambition x Grojecca), Dzina (Buizmex x Dzisal), Saharah (Sahat x Danathar), DM Marcedes True Love (RHR Marcedes x GR Katalma), M Angelique (Vision x Abanda) with the Karmaa (Kaboom x AH Mansial) family being the largest. After the parade we had a delicious lunch and Marion invited us to walk around the paddocks where we could see the horses close up while interacting with them, a testimony to their superb temperaments.

We then travelled onto Mulawa Arabian Stud, a short distance away at Berrilee. As we walked down the laneway to the impressive stables, we observed beautiful horses popping their heads out of the windows to greet us. One of Australia’s leading Arabian horse farms, Mulawa Arabian Stud was established around five decades ago by the Farrell family. Today Greg, Julie and Jane Farrell remain committed to the desert ideal of the elegant athlete, creating Arabian horses that possess the ultimate combination of both beauty and utility. Scott Benjamin did a sterling job as presenter during our visit. There were 14 impressive Arabians paraded and the mare families represented were Mulawa Chance (Ambition x Grojecca), Dzina (Buizmex x Dzisal), Saharah (Sahat x Danathar), DM Marcedes True Love (RHR Marcedes x GR Katalma), M Angelique (Vision x Abanda) with the Karmaa (Kaboom x AH Mansial) family being the largest. After this presentation the WAHO visitors chatted over an enjoyable meal and before long, it was time to travel back to our hotel. Everyone agreed it had been a memorably brilliant day. Friday was the final Conference day where further WAHO General Assembly business was completed. As is customary at these events, there was an excellent line-up of keynote guest speakers, which were scheduled for this day. For the first time ever, one talk was delivered by video. Dr. Madelaine Cornwall of the Royal Veterinary College UK, a specialist in Equine Reproduction; Animal Welfare Ethics, and Law, was unable to attend in person. Her detailed and enlightening video presentation, entitled Welfare and Ethical Issues in Horse Breeding was shown in the morning, before the later discussions on WAHO rules, in order for everyone to be aware of potential welfare and ethical implications of certain assisted reproduction techniques. It was particularly interesting to note her remark, when referring to past lectures at WAHO Conferences, that “Arabian breeders are not afraid of airing and discussing difficult issues. That makes you rate amongst horse breeders.”

Peter informed the delegates that, as promised at the 2017 Conference, he had written a strong letter to the F.E.I. I wish WAHO’s collective concerns about the welfare of endurance horses. WAHO keeps up to date with what’s happening in endurance and will if necessary write a further letter to the F.E.I. To follow up on their commitment to endurance horses, WAHO invited as a keynote speaker one of the world’s leading experts on the causes and prevention of injuries in race and endurance horses, Professor Chris Whitton, who leads equine orthopaedic research at the University of Melbourne. His two lectures on this topic, before and after the lunch break, were extremely informative and an eye-opener for every equestrian. Summing up his talk in a few words, he emphasised the importance of exercise even in younger horses, and of limiting the accumulation of bone fatigue and maximising bone repair by reducing speed and training intensity and allowing sufficient rest periods.

Peter also spoke about China, which has been an Applying Member of WAHO since 2017 and is now making good progress on tracking down and identifying the many imported horses, and on recording all their foals born in China to date. They are well advanced with their registration procedures which are in line with WAHO rules. They had hoped their first studbook would be ready to present by now, however, due to the vast size of China, a country where the concept of registration and studbooks is a novel one, that has not yet been possible. The WAHO office is working closely with the Chinese registry by email to complete the work before the next Conference. Dr. Wang Zhen Shan was acknowledged for his dedication, hard work and excellent achievements to date. Treasurer Caroline Sussex reported that WAHO’s income and expenditure remained much the same as in previous years, although considerably enhanced in 2017 by a very generous donation from the King of Bahrain. In order to continue balancing the books, she advised there will be increases to all categories of WAHO membership fees from January 1, 2020. Xavier Gulbert, Chairman of the WAHO World Registrars Meeting, gave an overview of their meeting which took place on 5th February. He told us about the complex new requirements for importing horses into the European Union which will need to be followed by non EU countries. He confirmed it had been agreed that the WAHO name change rule would not be altered at this time, and neither would the WAHO rules prohibiting the use of In Vitro fertilization or the rules prohibiting the registration of clones or the progeny of clones. Interesting facts were provided about the number of embryo transfer (ET) foals in some countries, in particular where multiple foals per year per mare are allowed under domestic rules. There was a strong feeling that although it was not enforceable due mainly to restraint of trade laws, educating breeders to limit themselves to producing a maximum of two ET foals per mare per year was broadly supported, on welfare grounds. He also informed us that as Registrars move away from producing costly printed studbooks, WAHO had proposed a set of new rules and recommendations for those studbooks produced only on .pdf, and for those with online studbooks, the text of which was later unanimously agreed by vote of the delegates. A current major concern to WAHO is the very new issue of genetic modification, gene editing and gene doping. Many readers will have heard about gene therapy in humans, which is the insertion of a gene to cure or treat a disease, something that of course is beneficial. On the other hand, gene doping is the insertion of a gene to improve performance. Gene editing, on the other hand, is the actual alteration
of a gene, using so-called ‘biological scissors’, at the embryo stage. Nobody yet knows what effect this gene editing and gene doping will have on the horses themselves, or on their progeny. The racing and sport horse authorities such as the I.S.B.C. and F.E.I are equally concerned and have already introduced their own rules on this. Several laboratories and genetic scientists are also working hard to develop new tests to detect altered genes. After some interesting discussion and additional information from Carlos Ezcurra, the delegate from Argentina, a country where some of these scientific advances, including large-scale cloning of polo ponies, are now commonplace, a new mandatory WAHO rule was unanimously agreed, to be effective immediately, which reads as follows:

**Genetic Modification Gene Editing and Gene Doping**

1. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian horse of any age which has been subjected to any form of genetic modification at the embryo stage or later must not be registered under any circumstances.

2. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the progeny of any Arabian horse which was subjected to any form of genetic modification at the embryo stage or later must not be registered under any circumstances.

3. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian horse of any age which has been conceived using genetically modified gametes must not be registered under any circumstances.

4. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the progeny of any Arabian horse which was conceived using genetically modified gametes must not be registered under any circumstances.

The remainder of the day was taken up with the guest speakers. We hope to include more details from these lectures in the next issue of this magazine. Apart from Dr. Campbell's video presentation and Professor Whitton's two talks already mentioned above, Julie Fiedler from Australia’s University of Central Queensland spoke about When Social Media Gallops Ahead – Sport Horse Welfare and Social Licence to Operate. This highlighted the influence of how public perception of horse sports can become very negative, and how we must all take care to ensure the welfare of the horses is seen to be proactively respected.

It all Begins with a Foal: Practical New Techniques in Foaling Practices and Foal Care, from Birth to Weaning was a fascinating lecture by the renowned American expert Cindy Reich. An especially important section was her explanation of the Madigan Foal Squeeze Procedure, a lifesaver for newborn ‘dummy foals’. Developed by John Madigan DVM at UC-Davis in USA, this involves wrapping the affected foal’s upper body in a certain way with loops of soft rope and applying pressure for 20 minutes, which replicates the compression a foal experiences that releases hormones which keep it immobilised during birth. NMS foals do not make the transition to full consciousness at birth, so this ‘squeeze’ helps them relax back into a deep sleep, and then when pressure is released, they ‘wake up’ normally. During the tea break, it was possible to practice the technique using a large cuddly toy foal specially provided for the purpose. Anyone who breeds horses is strongly encouraged to educate themselves about this technique, there is a wealth of information and video clips available online.

During Peter Pond’s closing address, he announced to sustained applause that Jordan will be hosting the next WAHO Conference in 2021. HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein then made the formal invitation, with a short presentation of some fascinating historical and current photos of Arabian horses in Jordan, and a brief film highlighting some of the country’s history and attractions.

This friendly, productive and enjoyable 2019 Conference ended with a splendid Gala Dinner, including an Art Auction and just the right type of music for dancing the night away. The next morning, many guests set out on the selection of Post Conference tours to the Hunter Valley, Queensland, Victoria and New Zealand, during which they would have the opportunity to see many more examples of our beautiful Arabians and Arabian Derivatives.

WAHO Conferences really are unique and have to be experienced to be truly appreciated. We are all now looking forward to WAHO Jordan 2021 and hope to see you there.